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The Land as a Textbook

An Adventure In Learning

U.S. Soil Conservation Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

PROVERBS OF THE LAND

“Tack the land down so it can’t get away.”

“Catch the water where it falls and hold it for our use.”

THE LAND IS A TEXTBOOK full of beauty, interest, and surprises. When this textbook is difficult to understand or needs interpretation, trained helpers are ready to serve us. Engineers, sociologists, stockmen, biologists, agronomists, soils men, nursery men, foresters, botanists, ecologists, and others who have to do with land use, are part of the faculty.

A NEW USE OF OLD KNOWLEDGE: Teachers and pupils are interested in this fascinating textbook of the land, but should assemble certain facts and concepts which are necessary to an understanding of land and water use. Some of these are:

The Water Cycle

The Living Soil

The Needs and Functions of Plants

Ground Litter

Man's Dependence on Soil and Water

The Balance of Nature

Interdependence of Soil, Water, Vegetation, and Animals

Types of Land

Man's Use of Land in the Aggregate and Individually

STUDENTS LEARN DAY BY DAY more about "My Land and Its Proper Use," "Basic Resources," "Upset Balance." Such knowledge applied to "My own food and water," to "My own shelter," to "My own safety and welfare," give a necessary background for understanding and action.

SUCH QUESTIONS ARISE AS:

What do we mean by land use?

What is ground cover?

Why do forests need small trees as well as big trees?

How does a tree grow? Where does a tree manufacture its food? Where does a tree get its nourishment?

What is ground litter? Of what is it composed? What does it do for us? What is humus?

How does grass grow? What part of the grass plant manufactures its food? What part stores its food? What happens if grass is not allowed to grow until it has its blade or leaf?

Of what value is grass besides nourishment for our animals? (Slows water, catches silt, roots hold the soil, etc.)

Where does the water for the earth come from? How does it reach the earth? Where should it go before returning to the ocean, lake, pond, river, etc.? What does it do for us? Why is it necessary that some water travel through the ground instead of rushing over the top?

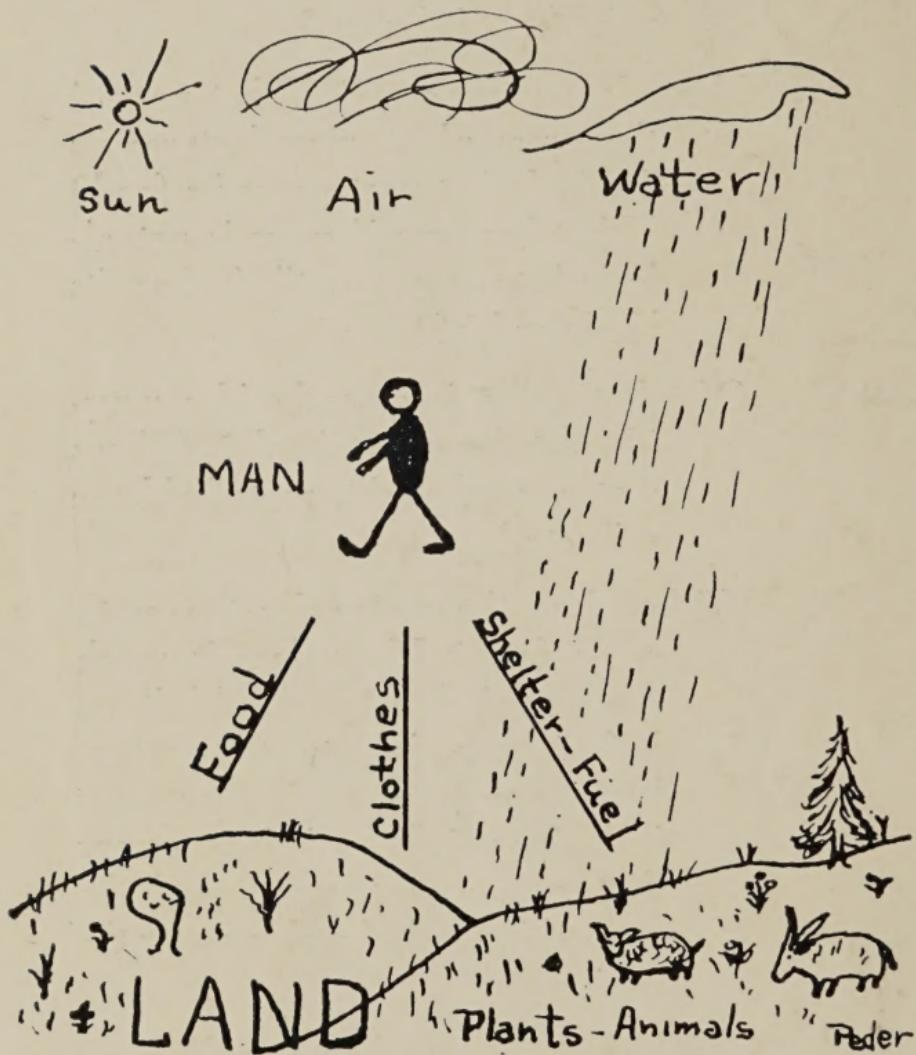
Should a steep slope be plowed? How should furrows run on any slope?

What is erosion? What is accelerated erosion? What is advanced erosion?

Children go to the land itself for answers.

The behavior of soil and water is an adventure in learning to students of all ages.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY move hand in hand. Children become thinkers and doers on the land. To each the Land is his. He understands its laws and is part and parcel of it. To each one the cloud is the purveyor of rain - - rain which can bring disaster, or blessed rain that brings needed moisture to all living plants and creatures. To each member of each community on the surface of the earth belongs the responsibility of proper land and water use.



Several accounts of experiences using the Land as a Textbook are available upon request from

Section of Education-Information
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